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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8151  
INFO RUEHAAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3146  
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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3759  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001308

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN, DRL, AND G/TIP

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TAGS: KCRM KWMN PHUM PREL UZ

SUBJECT: MFA RESPONDS TO HANFORD'S OFFER

REF: TASHKENT 1300

Classified By: CDA BRAD HANSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (C) On July 12, MFA U.S. Division Chief Ismat Fayzullaev informed Poloff that the Government had accepted Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford's offer to exchange a series of confidential letters on improving religious freedom in Uzbekistan. Hanford had suggested the exchange of letters during a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Shoazim Minovarov on June 29 (reftel). Fayzullaev suggested that Ambassador Hanford should address the first letter to Acting Religious Affairs Committee Chairman Ortiq Yusupov, and should include in it what he learned about religion in Uzbekistan during his trip and steps the GOU can take to improve religious freedom. Yusupov would then prepare a response.

¶2. (C) Comment: We are pleased that the Government has accepted Hanford's offer in principle. We anticipate that Ambassador Hanford will need to make additional trips to Tashkent to negotiate the final text of the letters. The devil may be in the details.

HANSON